

Decision Notice
and
Finding of No Significant Impact
for
West Shore Motorboat Access Project
Environmental Assessment

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Region One
490 North Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901

November 12, 2003

Description of the Proposed Action:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) has received funding through Boat-In-Lieu taxes and federal funding to repair the boat ramp, install a dock and wavebreak, stabilize approximately 50 feet of shoreline with rock riprap, install three handicapped-accessible vault toilets, and increase the boat trailer parking at the West Shore unit of Flathead Lake State Park. Plans call for eliminating Camp Loop B, with eight campsites, to provide twelve boat trailer and ten single-vehicle parking spaces. The conversion of the campsites above the current day-use parking lot to boat trailer parking is necessary due to the steep topography limiting parking near the shoreline area. These campsites will be relocated along the road to the overlook area.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks proposed to bring boat-launching facilities, toilets, and parking up to current standards, improve boater safety, make facilities accessible to the handicapped, and provide a boat trailer parking area as close to the boat ramp as the topography will allow without impacting the scenic shoreline of Flathead Lake. This would both increase the ability to meet existing demand for boat launching at West Shore and reduce the current over-capacity and vehicle circulation problems on weekends. The campsites in Camp Loop B would be relocated to the overlook road and made long enough for the larger RVs currently in use. This will allow FWP to restrict Camp Loop A to vehicles under 22 feet, hence lessening impacts on adjacent neighbors and resolving an ongoing issue of larger units not being able to navigate Camp Loop A due to the short turning radius. In addition, this will provide the "range of camping opportunity as topography allows" at West Shore that the public stated they would like to see in the surveys done in October of 2002.

This project would improve boater safety by widening the boat ramp from 10 feet to 24 feet, filling in the dog leg, adding a dock protected by a wavebreak, protecting approximately 50 feet of shoreline with rock riprap, and making facilities accessible to the handicapped, as well as providing a separate, dedicated boat trailer parking area. In order to retain the maximum number of campsites and camp trailer sites, 14 trailer-accessible camp spurs would be developed along the edge of the road to the Flathead Lake overlook and trailhead. This would provide both the tent and trailer camping opportunities desired by the public, while preserving the rustic campground atmosphere.

Public Comment:

During September of 2002, public scoping was done via a survey that was made available at the FWP office in Kalispell and at local sporting goods stores. The survey was mailed to adjacent neighbors, and a news release about the availability of the survey was done. Surveys were accepted until September 28, 2002. A total of 48 surveys were returned. Based on the results of the scoping survey, the project was designed. The campsites in Camploop B were relocated to the overlook road, with the facilities at the park being kept to vault toilets with no showers. The park emphasis was kept for boating, camping, and day use, with camping opportunities being mixed as terrain allows.

After the project was designed, an environmental assessment was written and an open house was held in Kalispell. Notification regarding the availability of the environmental assessment and the open house was done through the local paper and electronically to people with an e-mail address who had expressed interest in the project previously.

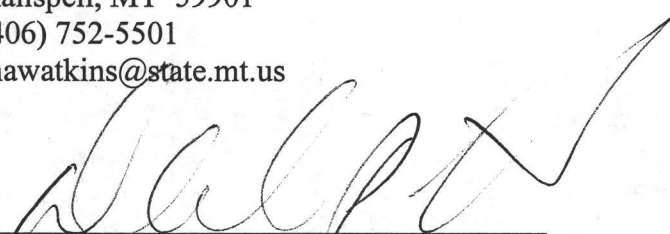
Three individuals came to the open house. Of those attending, two expressed support for the project and one expressed no opinion. Two letters and one phone call were received on the project, with two supporting the project and one opposed.

Finding of No Significant Impact:

Based on the analysis in the environmental assessment (EA), I find Alternative 4 to be the preferred alternative. This alternative will make boat access improvements to ramp and dock, pave existing day-use parking, and add three handicapped-accessible vault toilets, plus provide a new boat trailer parking lot by relocating campsites along the overlook road. I have evaluated the EA and applicable laws, regulations, and policies, and have determined that this action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

The final environmental assessment and the FONSI may be viewed at or obtained from Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region One, 490 North Meridian Road, Kalispell, MT 59901. Please direct requests and questions to:

Marty Watkins, Regional Parks Manager
Fish, Wildlife & Parks
490 North Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901
(406) 752-5501
mawatkins@state.mt.us



Daniel P. Vincent
Regional Supervisor

Date

11/12/03